FABACEOUS

Showing qualities of a bean, tasting like a bean or shaped like a bean. The common garden sweetpea, the green bean used in salads and in cooked dishes as well as the Acacia tree with its long white thorns are all members of the bean family, the *Fabaceae*. The word comes from the Latin *faba* that means 'bean'. An ordinary bean seed has a simple longish, rounded shape that is somewhat curved. Objects that closest resemble beans are those delicious little jelly bean sweets. They come in bright colours and their smooth bean-like bodies make it a pleasure to fiddle one's fingers around in a bag filled with them. Cashew nuts are *fabaceous* in shape but they are not related to the garden bean. Small pebbles can also vaguely resemble beans and the *fabaceous* shape for the Blind Alphabet Project is based on such a smooth, curved pebble. It was made on 17 July, 2015 from Africa's heaviest wood, a piece of solid leadwood (*Combretum imberbe*).

FALCATE

The moon, when it is visible as only a thin, curved shape can be referred to as *falcate* – in Latin a *falx* is a ‘sickle’. Any bent and thin shapes that taper towards the end are also *falcate*. Examples of such are the claws of cats and vultures, the horns of sable antelopes and goats, bent bean pods and curved bluegum leaves. *Falcuate* (notice the difference in spelling between *falcate* and *falcuate*) structures are microscopically small. Red blood cells, for example, are normally shaped like small disks but when they become *falcuate* we know that they are affected with the dreaded sickle-cell infection that causes attacks of acute pain and early death. The shape for the Blind Alphabet Project represents a slightly bent architectural beam. Such *falcate* beams can withstand great pressure from above if they are placed with the curve facing upwards. The shape was made on 19 July 2015 from pau marfim wood and inlaid with strips of leadwood and iroko across its centre.

FARCTATE

A *farctate* cushion is stuffed to the full and a *farctate* stomach has no more room for food. *Farctate* paintings bristle with a myriad details, so that there is no more room – in Latin *farcire* is ‘to stuff’. *Farciments* are various bits of sweetmeat, ham, and spices used as food-stuffing. No wonder that cramming for an exam leads to a *farctate* or overloaded brain. In the earth’s crust *farcilites* are rounded masses of stones in the bedrock that became naturally cemented over time. Such a *farctate* conglomerate of stones looks a little like a Christmas pudding stuffed with raisins and is hence also affectionately known as ‘puddingstone’ or ‘plum-pudding stone’. The sharp contrasts in colour and grain of sought-after ‘puddingstone’ are quite beautiful and prized jewellery has been created from it. This object for the Blind Alphabet Project was made on 21 July 2015 from a square base of ash irregularly *farcted* and studded with ‘stones’ of zebrawood.

FASCIATION

A *fasciation* is a bundle or a bundling-up. In botany, a *fasciation* is a fusing of separate parts on a plant and in geology it is a massing together of crystals into one cluster. Doctors *fasciate* limbs or wounds by bandaging them up. In Latin *fasciare* is ‘to swathe’ or ‘to bind’, from *fascia*, a ‘band’. In one of Aesop’s fables the old father asks each of his recalcitrant sons to provide a stick. When they fail to break the bundle of sticks thus gathered, he draws their attention to the strength that comes from unity and consolidation. Unfortunately an over-emphasis of togetherness on a national scale can lead to authoritarian *fascism*. On 23 July, 2015 seven similar sticks were carved from a solid stump of wild olive wood (*Olea europaea subspecies africana*). These were then loosely placed in a box of imbuia. One might imagine how these sticks can be *fasciated*, but a social, *fascist* binding that is too restrictive and exclusive is not desirable.

FASTIGIATION

A *fastigiate* shape resembles a cone or pyramid – more or less peaked or pointed at the top and sloping towards a broader base. Hills, flowers, solitary sand heaps and trees are often *fastigiately* shaped. Many pointed objects, like pencil tips, and steeply sloping rooftops are made by human *fastigiation* – in Latin *fastigium* is ‘spinning top’ or ‘rooftop’. The upright and rounded *fastigiate* shape of the pyramid hornbeam tree (*Carpinus betulus subspecies fastigiata*) makes it an excellent form tree for avenues and hedges. This tree is widespread from southern England, throughout southern Europe and western Asia into central Asia. On 27 July 2015 several elongated and tapering shapes of kiaat (*Pterocarpus angolensis*) were joined together so that they constitute a steep and multifaceted pyramid. If one looks carefully one can see that the larger shapes are actually made up of two or more pieces that are smoothly glued together.

FATUOID

A *fatuous* comment or exploit is rather silly and pointless, from the Latin *fatuus* 'foolish'. To sow wild or false oats is to do wild and stupid things in one's youth, often assumed to have some sort of sexual meaning – "John was out sowing his wild oats last night, and he's in jail this morning." The wild oat, botanically known as *Avena fatua* looks much like the real oat, but its *fatuoid* flimsy seeds lack substance and are not fit for human consumption. A number of *fatuoid* grasses occur in the wild, mostly as weeds in agricultural fields. These wild oats or oat-grasses are often confused with the common oat (*Avena sativa*), a cereal crop of global importance that provides food to millions. For the Blind Alphabet Project the simple *fatuoid* shape of the seed husk of the wild oat was sculpted on 28 July 2015. The light-weight wood of the main seed body is meranti and the two spikes or awns that stick out of the endings are made of poplar.

FENESTRIFORM

Having the shape of a window – in Latin a *fenestra* is a ‘window’. Many buildings, on their interior or exterior wall surfaces, have *fenestriform* panelling that create the idea of windows. A most delicate succulent plant, the *Fenestraria*, more affectionately known as babies’ toes, grows in the semi-desert areas of Namaqualand and Namibia to the west of Southern Africa. It has round leaves that look like a cluster of tiny fingers of which the *fenestriform* tips have been fitted with little glassy peepholes. To *defenestrate* someone or something is to throw them out of the window, an act reserved for the forcible or peremptory removal of an adversary or of objectionable goods. The *fenestriform* structure for the Blind Alphabet Project has a deepset row of four, rectangular windows and was made on 30 July 2015 out of a piece of Zimbabwe teak (*Baikiaea plurijuga*). This simple but solid wall-like piece is fitted with a base of toon wood (*Cedrela toona*).

FENICULACEOUS

A *feniculaceous* shape, habit or taste resembles that of the fennel plant (*Foeniculum vulgare*). Do not be fooled by the wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*). It has a *feniculaceous* appearance, but contact with the toxic sap in its leaves and stems cause a painful rash. In studying fennel from the garden or as food from the kitchen one is struck by the *feniculaceous* aroma. Not only are the fine spray of leaves sought after in salads, but the bulbous roots are used effectively in many meals for their soft, delicious liquorice taste. The mature fennel plant usually has a few of these underground bulbs that fit snugly into one another. The tight-fit manner in which the fennel bulbs seem to hug one another gave rise to the sculpture made for the Blind Alphabet Project on 5 August 2015. Because the four bulbs were so sculpted as to suggest the complex shapes of a few people hugging, obeche (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*), a soft wood imported from tropical Africa, was used.

FESTUCACEOUS

Straw consists mostly of dried stalks of grain and grass, used as fodder or as packing material – in Latin *festuca* is ‘stalk’. In some instances, straw is useful in weaving hats and baskets. *Festucaceous* plants are of the grass family, the *Poaceae*. A single dried stalk of straw can be quite firm and those who enjoy nature have often chewed on a straw. The biggest *festucaceous* surprise of all is the tapah weed that grows from India to Malaysia. In its native lands it is considered a nuisance and treated as straw, but in the west it is a rarity because, in spite of the fact that it looks decidedly like grass or reed, it is not a grass at all. The tapah is a most beautiful orchid with a delicate purple and mauve flower. For the Blind Alphabet Project two *festucaceous* reed-stalks were sculpted on 6 July 2015 from zebrawood (*Microberlinia*) of western Africa. The remarkably striped lines of zebrawood are used to suggest the gentle rise-and-fall of the simple design of the nodes.

FICIFORM

Ficiform fruits are shaped like the fruit of the garden fig – a *ficus* in Latin. Fruits like the edible feijoa (*Acca sellowiana*), widespread in South America, are not figs at all, but are nevertheless *ficiform*. Other *ficiform* appearances that are not fruits range from a bun of hair, a tightly wound bundle of clothes, organic door handles to the drupe of a knob nose, also known as a conk, on an alcohol-weathered face. A slightly elongated ripe fig was studied for the Blind Alphabet Project. It was imagined that the weight of this fruit would draw its shape down as it sits on the tree. An additive method of sculpting was used, much the same as the method used in modelling with clay. First, the main central form, a little larger than the rest, was selected and then pieces of wood of variable size were carefully added, one by one, to fill out the shape of the fig. This *ficiform* sculpture, completed on 15 August 2015, consists mainly of kiaat wood (*Pterocarpus angolensis*).

FINDIBLENESS

Findibleness is the capability of something to split open. Seed pods, like the peanut, the bean and pistachio depend on their *findibleness* in order to propagate. Old, dry wood is *findible* in straight cracks along its length and badly sewn seams on fabrics are *findible* in different ways. Rocks are *findible* under heat and a ship becomes *findible* in a storm. A similar word to *findible* is *fissible*. *Fissible* objects and plants also show the ability to cleave apart or of being cleft. Nuclear *fission* is the splitting of a large atom into two or more smaller ones. *Fusion* is the fusing of two or more lighter atoms into a larger one. In Latin *findere* is 'to split'. With the idea of a seed pod splitting open along a single seam, the *findible* shape for the Blind Alphabet Project shows two pieces of ash (*Fraxinus*) separating along a smooth curve. The two undulating pieces are mounted on a rectangular piece of African mahogany (*Afzelia quanzensis*) and were sculpted on 18 August 2015.

FATISCENCE

We find the most conspicuous *fatiscence* in cracked-up mud plains. *Fatiscent* surfaces are full of chinks and clefts, all broken up – in Latin *fati-* is 'yawning'. The *fatiscent* surface of the mud pans of the Etosha National Park in Namibia stretches out for many kilometres. Usually the *fatiscent* process begins when a wet muddy surface dries too fast under the harsh sun. If the wet surface is very thick, the chinks and crackles can open rapidly, creating the impression of a simple repetitive pattern. The fine crackles in paint of old paintings or of walls can also be *fatiscent*, but on thin layers of paint the process can take years to form. A more technical term for such fine cracks is *craquelure*. The object made for the Blind Alphabet Project on 21 August 2015 is a thick rectangle of wood of which the central area is inlaid with a *fatiscence* of African rosewood (*Guibourtia coleosperma*). The area surrounding the chinks is of cherry wood and the base is meranti.

FUSIFORM

A *fusiform* object is shaped like a spindle. The most common spindle is a straight stick with string wound around it. There are, however, many types of spindles, ranging from distaffs – spindles on long sticks, to shuttles – spindles so shaped that they can weave a strand of yarn through the weft and warp on a loom. The most simple *fusiform* shape is that of a cigar. Aeroplanes have large spindle-shaped *fuselages* – in Latin a *fusus* is a 'spindle'. The small aperture or tube from which a spider spins its web is called a *fusula* or 'spool'. These *fusulae* are mounted at the top of something that looks like a moveable turret, called a 'spinneret'. In heraldry, a *fusil* is the shape of an elongated lozenge representing a spindle with thread on it. With this lozenge shape and the shape of a shuttle-spindle in mind the *fusiform* shape for the Blind Alphabet Project was made on 24 August 2015 from iroko, a west African hardwood obtained from the iroko tree (*Milicia excelsa*).

FUNDIFORM

A *fundiform* muscle, tendon or an appendage on a plant has the shape of a sling – *funda* in Latin. The common sling is a projectile weapon typically used to throw blunt bullets such as pebbles, clay nuggets, or lead pellets. It has a small cradle or pouch in the middle of two lengths of cord. In the human anatomy, the penis, at its root, is supported by a *fundiform* ligament that runs from the level of the pubic bone, laterally around the sides of the penis like a sling, and then unites as a cradle at the base. We also have a *fundiform* ligament at the front of the ankle, formed by two leg muscles. The sling is often used by farming folk as a crude hunting instrument, or as a way of keeping herds of sheep and cattle in check. This ancient device, traditionally made of leather was the starting point for the *fundiform* object made for the Blind Alphabet Project on 15 September 2015. The wood, Transvaal beech (*Faurea saligna*), is also known as boekenhout.

FOVEOLATE

The term *foveolate* describes a skin or membrane such as that of an animal, insect, or plant as pitted or marked with small depressions. A *fovea* is one such a small depression. It is not as small as a *foveola*, best described as a pinprick. *Foveal* growth is microscopically small and takes place inside such small depressions. Little dimples across the *foveolated* skin of strawberries or of the peel of citrus fruits like oranges and mandarins can clearly be seen. More delicate is the *foveolated* surface on the shiny shell of an ostrich egg. A piece of kiaat (*Pterocarpus angolensis*) was chosen for the Blind Alphabet Project because it had a strip of light sapwood along a body of darker heartwood. A series of irregular dimples were then carved on and around the edge between the sapwood and the heartwood so that the *foveolate* contrast between light and dark would meander in and out of the dimples. The piece was completed on 19 September 2015.

FORCIPATE FORFICATE

A *forcipation* is the gnawing of crabs and in earlier days of western ‘civilisation’ *forcipation* was a method of torture by nipping at the soft flesh of a victim with a pair of pincers. Claws of crabs and lobsters act like a *forceps*, a pair of pincers from the Latin *forceps*, ‘tongs’ or ‘tweezers’. A closely related word is *forficate*. A *forficate* instrument is shaped or functions like a pair of scissors – in Latin *forfex* is ‘scissors’. *Forficulate* insects have small pincers shaped like a pair of tiny scissors. In Latin *forficula* is ‘small scissors’. The earwig is a curious *forficulate* insect with its pair of ‘scissors’ located in the tail. Male earwigs have curved pincer-scissors and females straight ones. The object for the Blind Alphabet Project has handles such as on a pair of scissors, but the triangular pieces of wood on the front part have been left solid and heavy, only suggesting a *forcipate* action. The work was finished in ash and beech wood on 25 September 2015.

FLABELLIFORM

Flabelliform materials and objects have the shape of a hand-held fan. The common fan is a device that folds up and is shaped like a segment of a circle when spread out. The oldest existing pair of fans are Chinese fans of bamboo dating back 2,200 years. Fans are used to induce the flow of air for the purpose of cooling or refreshing oneself. Many palm trees are known for their display of splendidly spread-open *flabelliform* leaves. These leaves are also described as *palmate*, referring to the palm of the hand with its widespread fingers, spread-open like a fan. Some of the most spectacular *flabelliform* palms are the Chinese fan palm (*Livistona*), the California fan palm (*Washingtonia*) and the lala palm (*Hyphaene*) of Southern Africa. A fanning to create wind so that things can cool down is a *flabellation*. In Latin *flabellum* is 'fan'. A few simple blocks of kiaat wood (*Pterocarpus angolensis*) were angled together in a spread-out fan-like manner on 5 October 2015.

FAVIFORM

A *faviform* structure has the multi-faceted appearance of a honeycomb, from the Latin *favus*, 'honeycomb'. Each cell in a honeycomb is a hexagon – it has six sides and *faveolate* structures are shaped like the composite cellular structure of a honeycomb. Honeycomb structures in man-made materials, in nature and in architecture show incredible strength. The *favificous* habit of wasps and other insects is their ability to manufacture their own particular types of honeyless comb as their home. Not all combs are honeycombs and Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983), an American architect is famous for designing his own version of *faviform* roof structures. For the Blind Alphabet Project a *faviform* pattern was shallowly knurled out of a flat piece of American walnut (*Juglans nigra*). In this way the slightly raised surface would be similar to 'read' to the small dots of Braille writing. The piece was fitted with two supports to make handling easier.

FILIFEROUS

A *filiferous* surface or body is full of thread-like fibres. In Latin *filum* is ‘thread’, but objects do not have to contain string to be *filiferous*, a rootball trapped in a pot that is too small, a plate of spaghetti and muscle tissue criss-crossing the anatomy can also be *filiferous*. *Filiform* items like stringy pieces of fluff or a wispy cloud in the sky, resemble threads in their own distinctive ways. A surface that has fibres finer than hair is *fibrilliferous*. A *fibril* is a minute fibre, from the Latin *fibrilla*, the diminutive of *fibra*, ‘fibre’. *Filipendulous* flowers, like the harebells (*Dierama*) and the dropwort (*Spiraea filipendula*) sway gracefully in the wind because they are suspended on slender threads. The sculpture for the Blind Alphabet Project took weeks because of all the fine carving and sanding. The limewood (*Tilia*) is a soft, malleable receptive medium traditionally used for delicate renderings. This painstaking process was completed on 23 October 2015.

FIBULATION

The act of opening and closing a clasped article, or of generally fiddling with buttons or clasps. A *fibulous* object looks like a button, a clasp or one of the many devices used in securing clothing, jewellery or containers. The action of *infibulation* is the controversial method of female genital mutilation and circumcision whereby the edges of the vulva are stitched together to prevent sexual intercourse. In Latin a *fibula* is a 'brooch' and *infibulat-* is 'fastened with a clasp'. Various types of *fibulation* include the buttoning up of garments, the zipping up of jackets and pants and the clasping of a watch strap. For the Blind Alphabet Project two pieces of blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) were curved to resemble the strap of a watch or belt. They were then hinged at one end so that they describe a *fibulation* of clasping over a round button-like knob, of Madagascar rosewood (*Dalbergia maritima*). The piece was completed on 30 October 2015.

FILICIFORM

Shaped like a fern or a fern leaf. Ferns have traditionally been grouped in the class *Filices*, but modern classifications assign them their own phylum or division in the plant kingdom, called *Pteridophyta*, also known as *Filicophyta*. The fact that this group of plants has two names derive from the fact that some prefer the Latin and some the Greek derivation. British ferns, for example, are called *Filicopsida*. In Latin *filix* is 'fern' and in Greek it is *pteris*. Ferns are different from other plants that they reproduce by means of spores rather than seeds. The spores are situated on the undersides of their feathery leaves. A rather solid leaf was carved for the Blind Alphabet project in September, 2016. Small gouge-marks were carved into on the surface so that something of the frilly, feathery texture so characteristic of fern leaves could be detected by touch. The wood is the tough Zimbabwe teak (*Baikiaia plurijuga*).

FLAGELLIFORM

A *flagelliform* item is shaped like the lash of a whip. In Latin a *flagellum* is a ‘whip’. Many living organisms have whip-like runners, tendrils or protrusions called *flagella*. When plants, like the mosses bear masses of *flagella*, they are said to be *flagelliferous*. Orb-web weaving spiders rely on *flagelliform* silk in their aerial nets to entrap flying prey. *Flagellar* motion causes water currents necessary for respiration and circulation in sponges, jellyfishes, corals, and sea anemones. Most single-celled organisms are capable of motion, move by means of *flagella.* The composite object made for the Blind Alphabet project consists of three curvilinear, *flagelliform* rods that are attached to a pivot at their thicker ends. The rods move about to create the idea of moving whip-like tendrils. The piece, in tamboti wood (*Spirostachys africana*), was completed in July, 2016

FORNICIFORM

Fornice is an architectural term for an arch or vault. The most common type of a *fornice* is the barrel vault, also known as a tunnel vault, which is forms an extended curve along a given distance. Barrel vaulting was known by early civilizations, including Egypt and Mesopotamia, but was not always popular due to the difficulty in construction. *Forniciform* elements can be found anatomical passage- or room-like spaces, as for example in the vaginal *fornix*. This feature is a recess at the back of the vagina, which is divided into an anterior vault, a posterior vault, and lateral vault with respect to its relation to the cervix of the uterus. The *forniciform* structure of the Blind Alphabet project, completed in October, 2016, consists of six lengths of wood that are wedge-shaped along their length to allow them to combine as a barrel vault. White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*) and American walnut (*Juglans nigra*) are used.

FOSSULATE

A *fossa* (the plural is *fosse*) is a borrowed Latin term for ‘ditch’ or ‘pit’. The word *fossulate* is often used in anatomy to describe skin tissue or other surfaces on insects and animals as being full of thin furrows or grooves. The tongue of a rhinoceros is broad, flat and divided by a furrow in the middle. It is then covered in *fossulate* protuberances called papilae which, in turn, are further divided into smaller *fossulae*. Microbiology often refers to *fossulate* surfaces and structures. Pollen, for example, is hardly visible to the naked eye, but under a microscope a grain of pollen may reveal *fossulate* spaces and apertures in the indentations between the lobes. For the Blind Alphabet a block of zebrano (*Microberlinia brazzavillensis*) was hollowed out to create a large *fossa* which was then scored with numerous gouge marks to create an overall *fossulate* appearance. The piece was completed in September, 2016.

FUNGILLIFORM

A *fungilliform* object is shaped like a mushroom. In Latin *fungillus* is the diminutive of *fungus*, 'mushroom'. People, rabbits and insects are *fungivorous*, we eat mushrooms. The round crab *(Ladomedaeus fungillus*) gets its zoological name from the shape and texture of its carapace, its round and hard upper shell with soft *fungilliform* markings. The most notable *fungilliform* appearance is perhaps the mushroom-shaped cloud of debris and smoke resulting from a nuclear explosion. The common mushroom has a stem, a cap called a pileus, and fin-like gills called lamellae on the underside of the cap. For the Blind Alphabet project a number of curved and angular shapes were pieced together in a round, faceted composition to resemble a fractured dome and gills of a mushroom. The piece was made in September, 2016 in imbuia (*Ocotea porosa*), a South American wood.